

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-25 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 AID-20 OMB-01 IO-14 DRC-01 EB-11 TRSE-00

COME-00 STR-08 CIEP-02 NIC-01 /172 W

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P R 051220Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2198

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 5671

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH, PFOR, CH

SUBJECT: NLA BALKS AT CHINA TRADE BILL

1. NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (NLA) RELUCTANCE TO QUICKLY REPEAL REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (RP) DECREE 53 PROHIBITING TRADE WITH CHINA HAS BEEN A SOURCE OF CONSIDERABLE GOVERNMENT DISCOMFITURE OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS. NOT ONLY DID A BILL TO REPEAL RP DECREE 53 FAIL TO PASS THE MARCH 23 NLA SESSION, BUT THE NLA REQUESTED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER PUT IN AN APPEARANCE TO DISCUSS IT. DESPITE THE PRIME MINISTER'S APPEARANCE BEFORE A CLOSED NLA SESSION APRIL 5, THE OPPOSITION TO THE REPEAL CARRIED THE DAY. RATHER
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THAN THE TOTAL DEFEAT OF SENDING THE BILL BACK TO THE CABINET, HOWEVER, THE NLA SENT THE BILL TO A TWENTY MAN COMMITTEE

FOR STUDY AND POSSIBLE REVISION.

2. A KEY FACTOR IN THE NLA RELUCTANCE TO PASS THE RP DECREE 53 REPEAL IS A DEVELOPING MOVEMENT AGAINST THE DEFENSE MINISTER, AIR CHIEF MARSHALL THAWI CHUNLASAP. MANY MEMBERS FELT THAT THAWI HAD MADE SOME UNDISCLOSED AGREEMENT WITH THE CHINESE DURING HIS FEBRUARY VISIT TO PEKING. FURTHERMORE, NLA MEMBERS HAVE TOLD US THAT THAWI ARRANGED THE TRIP TO PEKING TO SUPPORT HIS OWN POLITICAL AMBITIONS.

3. THE GOVERNMENT'S PARLIAMENTARY INEPTITUDE ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO THE SHELIVING OF THE BILL. WHEN THE GOVERNMENT PRESENTED THE BILL TO THE NLA, IT ASKED THAT THE NLA COMPLETE ALL THREE READINGS IN ONE SESSION. THIS IS THE SAME URGENCY WHICH LEAD TO THE NLA REJECTION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S CAR REGISTRATION FEES BILL IN JANUARY.

4. FINALLY, MANY NLA MEMBERS CRITICIZE THE DRAFT BILL FOR THE LACK OF CONTROLS OVER SINO-THAI TRADE, AND THE PROFITERRING THAT COULD RESULT. SEVERAL MEMBERS SEE NO REASON TO REPEAL RP DECREE 53 WHEN THE CHINESE CONTINUE TO NOURISH THE THAI INSURGENCY AND BROADCAST ANTI-THAI PROPAGANDA FROM KUNMING.
KINTNER

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